

TO: TAB  
FROM: CJS  
DATE: 12/19/11

**RE: Marion Perreira.**

**A. Introduction.**

The following memorandum is an attempt to summarize the information contained in the Perreira file up to December 19, 2011. The information detailed in this memorandum is from the Stratford Police Department's Incident Report, Incident No. 10-18481 as well as my conversations with ACO Solviera and Maureen Whelan of the Health Department. It should be noted that the Police Incident reports go more in depth than this memorandum, however, many sections that may contain embarrassing facts regarding the Perreiras have been omitted.

**B. Facts and Relevant History.**

The Health Department of the Town of Stratford has been dealing with Marion Perreira since the 1990s. On September 13, 2006, the Perreiras were in Housing Court with Maureen Whalen from the Health Department as a result of the Perreiras failure to comply with a Health Department order to abate a foul odor emanating from the residence. During the course of the proceedings, the judge had to temporarily stop because he stated that he could smell Ms. Perreira from the bench.

On July 27, 2010 a complaint was received by the Animal Control Office regarding Marion Perreira. Animal Control Officer (herein "ACO") Solviera went to the residence with Maureen Whalen from the Health Department and detected a foul odor emanating from the residence. On that date, Ms. Perreira had approximately eighteen (18) cats at her residence. Ms. Perreira authorized ACO Solviera to go into and inspect her house. A total of nine (9) cats were taken from the residence because they were covered in urine and fecal matter, as well as were infested with fleas, suffering from upper respiratory diseases, worms and eye infections.

Two days later, on July 29, 2010, ACO Solviera, AACO Fitzmorris, AACO Pixley, AACO Pennatto, Trumbull Animal Control Officer Lynn Dellabianco, State of Connecticut ACO Nancy Jarvis and Fairfield Animal Control Officer Paul Miller, went to Ms. Perreira's house. Ms. Perreira granted these individuals authorization to enter her residence. Approximately twenty (20) cats were taken from the residence. All of these twenty (20) cats were so sick that it was determined that they needed to be euthanized.

On August 1, 2010, ACO Pixley, ACO Fitzmorris and ACO Solviera returned to Marion Perreira's home *per her request*. The ACO at the scene removed five (5) cats from the residence. There were a total of six cats that appeared to be living at the house; however the last cat could not be located by the ACO's at the scene. The five cats that were obtained were subsequently diagnosed at Snowflake Pet Center with diseases such as Bartonella disease (a.k.a. cat scratch fever) various eye and ear infections, wounds of unknown origin, ear mites and fleas.

On September 9, 2010, ACO Pixley and ACO Solviera returned to the Perreira residence and found the sixth and final cat. The cat was trapped and taken to Snowflake Pet Center where it tested positive for feline Bartonella. The cat was subsequently neutered and returned to the shelter later that week. While at the Perreira residence, ACO Pixley and ACO Solviera noted that the house had not been

cleaned for years. For example, the wood furniture in the kitchen had “water damage” that appeared to be caused by years of exposure to cat urine. In their report, ACOs Pixley and Solviera state that:

“[Ms.] Perreira is neither willing nor able to comprehend the condition of her home...she declined every offer made by any town agency to assist her in the cleaning, including free meals that were offered so that she may free up some time from cooking, and our offer of volunteers to come in and remove the trash that she has accumulated...Perreira also was unable to comprehend that the majority of her animals were ill, citing that there are no physical symptoms or tests for Bartonella....” Incident Report 10-18481, p. 2, September 27, 2010.

From September 2, 2010 through October 14, 2010, Ms. Perreira sought counseling with the Reach Program at Bridgeport Hospital. Ms. Perreira stated that she went for an appointment but they did not recommend any further counseling.

On October 14, 2010, ACO Solviera, Health Director Andrea Boissevain, Maureen Whalen and Captain Kenneth Bakalar went to Ms. Perreira’s residence. ACO Solviera stated that the condition of the home showed improvement but was still cluttered and still smelled like cat urine.

From September 1, 2010 through March 1, 2011, ACO Solviera allowed Ms. Perreira to visit her cats. Ms. Perreira visited her cats on only three occasions. As of early 2011, a total of thirty five (35) documented cats were taken from the Perreira Residence

On February 10, 2011, both Marion and William Perreira signed an Agreement with the Town of Stratford to have their residence professionally cleaned, refurbished and outfitted with new appliances. The Agreement authorized Animal Control and the cleaning company to throw out all objects that were affected with cat urine and fecal matter. In addition, the agreement provided that the Perreira’s would receive a grant from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (herein “A.S.P.C.A.”) in the amount of \$8,586.00 to fund the cleaning. Another five hundred dollar (\$500.00) grant was also obtained from the Stratford Animal Rescue Society and Bob’s Discount Furniture Charitable Foundation to be used to purchase new furniture. The Agreement also provided that upon the completion of the cleaning process, five cats would be returned to Ms. Perreira, provided that the cats were brought to a veterinarian in accordance with the schedule contained in the Agreement. Ms. Perreira failed to comply with the agreed upon schedule.

### **C. The Condition of the Perreira Residence before the Cleaning.**

Before the cleaning commenced, ACO Solviera inspected the Perreira residence and took approximately 140 photographs of the residence. The Perreira’s were advised to box up all reasonable items that they wanted to keep and discard the items they did not want to keep. However, upon entering the home for cleaning, just about all of the items in the house were in boxes marked “KEEP”. In most instances, the items contained in the boxes were broken, damaged beyond repair, saturated in cat urine, or un-cleanable and easily replaceable.

The following descriptions of each room are the condition of the Perreira residence before the residence was cleaned.

i. The Dining Room.

In the dining room there were approximately twenty (20) cardboard boxes stacked along the walls. There was also an undetermined amount of open boxes in the room that were filled with newspapers, books and magazines. As for the condition of the furniture in the dining room, the dining room table was broken along with the two wooden chairs and the two piece china cabinet. All the items were salvaged.

ii. The Living Room.

In the living room, there were approximately fifteen (15) boxes marked “KEEP”. In addition, there was a Zenith television so covered in cat urine that the wood around the television was blistering. Due to extensive urine saturation, the wall to wall carpet and a throw rug were removed. Finally, a couch, chair and an end table were disposed of and replaced as contracted.

The integrity of the structure of the Perreira residence is also lacking as while workers were moving furniture in the bedroom directly above the living room, ACO Solviera reported that the entire ceiling moved roughly two inches.

iii. Marion Perreira’s Room.

In Marion Perreira’s room there were between forty (40) to fifty (50) boxes and suitcases marked “KEEP”. The ceiling over Ms. Perreira’s bed had fallen in and was repaired with cardboard and duct tape.

iv. The Kitchen.

In the kitchen there were approximately three (3) boxes of current and expired foods. The expired foods were discarded along with the foods that appeared to be unsafe for consumption due to rust, damage or filth. Rodent droppings were discovered inside some of the boxes and all of the items in the boxes were discarded. The walls of the kitchen exhibited heavy swelling as a result of extensive urine damage. In fact, the spraying on the walls was so bad that the wooden paneling on the walls had to be removed because it could not be cleaned. In addition, the refrigerator had severe rust on the outer surfaces as a result of continued exposure to cat urine. The refrigerator was removed and replaced as contracted.

v. The Porch.

On the porch, there were “numerous” containers of chemicals and broken yard tools that were marked “KEEP”. In addition, boxes of urine soaked board games and puzzles were labeled, “Keep for the Vietnam Vets”. All the items from this room, with the exception of some salvageable yard tools were discarded.

vi. The Stairwell.

ACO Solviera reported that the stairwell was riddled with structural problems. For instance, the bottom step was not secured to the floor or risers and the railing almost came loose from the wall when it was touched and nearly fell several times as workers attempted to use it to balance. The steps were also covered in urine and dirt.

At the top of the stairs there was a room with wooden floors with approximately fifty (50) boxes. There were also two old wooden bed frames and a wooden writing desk that was saturated with urine and falling apart.

vii. William Perreira's Bedroom.

ACO Solviera reported that there was garbage and piles of dust and appeared to have not been cleaned for many years. For instance the mattress located in this bedroom was so soiled, it was black. There were two dressers located in the room and the large portions of the plaster had fallen from the ceiling and water damage was evident throughout the room. Thick black clumps of dust were hanging from the curtain and ceiling as well as objects hung on the walls. There was a hole in the floor directly beneath the window in the room. All of the trash and items in the room were disposed of, except for two stereo systems.

viii. The Attic.

The attic contained approximately one hundred (100) boxes that the cleaning crew was unable to sort through due to time constraints. There was a note on the door to the attic that stated, "Keep closed at all times. Squirrels will get into house." It was later discovered by the workers that it was not squirrels, but more cats that were living in the attic.

ix. The Bathroom and Laundry Room.

The bathroom had one box marked "KEEP" that was placed in the shower. The laundry room was the final room and contained approximately forty (40) boxes marked "KEEP". These boxes were filled with dozens of soiled and saturated carpet fragments, cloth and tablecloths. All of the items were stained, and damaged by prolonged exposure to urine. There were also numerous two liter bottles of soda that were all expired by at least seven years. Some of the bottles were so old; they had begun to cave in. There was also extensive water damage to the bay window.

x. The Backyard.

In the backyard, there were three makeshift cat enclosures constructed out of newspaper, scrap wood, carpet fragments and various other materials.

**D. The Cleaning Process—March 1, 2011 through March 8, 2011.**

i. Timeline.

The Town of Stratford hired ServPro, a professional cleaning company, to conduct cleaning operations from March 1, 2011 to March 8, 2011. During the duration of the cleaning process, the Perreira's were moved into the Comfort Suites per the terms of the Agreement with the Town of Stratford.

On March 1, 2011, ACO Pixley and ACO Solviera went to the Perreira's residence to begin the authorized cleaning. There was a strong odor of cat urine from outside the house, even though cats had not lived in the house for over seven months.

On March 3, 2011 and March 4, 2011 ACO Solviera returned to the Perreira residence to assist in sorting items in all boxes marked "KEEP". According to ACO Solviera, roughly 60% of the items were of no value, such as magazines, destroyed books, newspapers, broken ceramics and glass. All of these items were heavily soiled, stained, and exposed to urine.

On March 5, 2011 ACO Solviera returned to the Perreira residence and took approximately one hundred (100) more photographs. The cleaning company left with two full truckloads of trash before ACO Solviera arrived on the scene. The third load of garbage was photographed by ACO Solviera before the garbage was placed in the truck. ACO Solviera noticed that after the cleaning the rooms had shown improvement, but the odor of urine persisted.

On March 7, 2011, ACO Solviera returned to the Perreira residence to install replacement furniture including a kitchen table, four chairs, a television stand and microwave stand. When ACO Solviera arrived on the premises, she noticed a small puddle of water had formed on the floor of the laundry room, as the result of a heavy rain the night before.

On March 8, 2011, ACO Solviera returned to the Perreira residence to collect two remaining cat traps from the property.

On March 11, 2011, ACO Solviera, Police Officer Muschett, ACO Fitzmorris, ACO Pixley and Stratford Animal Rescue Society (herein "STARS") President O'Malley returned the five (5) cats were returned to Ms. Perreira per the terms of the Agreement. A full size cat carrier was left for Ms. Perreira to keep and use for her cats.

ii. Summary of the Cleaning Process.

From March 1, 2011 to March 8, 2011, ACO Pixley and ACO Solviera documented a total of approximately two hundred sixty five (265) to two hundred seventy five (275) boxes marked "KEEP" and a total of seventeen (17) cats were trapped and removed from the premises, including the skeletal remains of a kitten. The Town is not in possession of any record of all of the items that were thrown out.

All of the cats taken from the Perreira residence were infected with various respiratory diseases and/or had open wounds. All the cats were transported to Snowflake Pet Center for diagnosis. As of March 8, 2011, the total number of cats that were removed from the Perreira residence totaled fifty-two (52) cats.

**D. Ms. Perreira's Claim against the Town of Stratford.**

Marian Perreira submitted a claim to the Town of Stratford sometime during the month of September 2011. The claim totaled \$35,555.50, for items that the Town had allegedly removed during the cleaning process. The items are priced at the price the items would be worth as "new". In addition, former CAO, Geen Thazampallath held a hearing with Marion Perreira that lasted a few hours, the date of which I am unsure.

As of March 11, 2011, the total expenditures on this case totaled \$13,306.26 for vet bills and other expenses, which do not include any Animal Control Officer overtime or any food and boarding fees for the five cats. In addition, \$1,880.63 was spent on purchasing the following pieces of furniture:

- Sofa;
- Recliner;
- Microwave cart;
- Television stand;

- Four (4) chairs;
- Refrigerator;
- Kitchen table;
- One (1) standing lamp;
- Large screen television;
- Set of silverware;
- Kitchen towels;
- Pot holders;
- Sixteen (16) piece kitchen dish and cup set;
- Eight (8) piece pots and pans set;
- Queen Airbed with electric pump;
- Two (2) queen sheet sets;
- Five (5) cat litter pans;
- Two (2) new scoops;
- Twelve (12) twenty-five (25) pound bags of cat litter;
- One (1) case of twenty-four (24) cans of cat food;
- Four (4) ten pound bags of cat food;
- Cat storage bin;
- Forty (40) pound stackable pet food container; and
- Six (6) brand new plastic cat bowls.

As part of my investigation, Animal Control Officer, Rachel Solviera, provided me with approximately 140 photos and two videos of the Perreira residence, taken pre-cleaning and post-cleaning. I also spoke with ACO Solviera regarding the process and procedure during the cleaning. The photographs of the residence “pre-cleaning” shows that most, if not all, surfaces and items that were located in the house were completely covered in cat urine and fecal matter. For example, the refrigerator had started to rust from the constant exposure to cat urine. Most of the items that Ms. Perreira listed in her inventory appears in the “pre-cleaning” pictures were completely destroyed in that they are coated in cat urine and fecal matter and otherwise appeared to be of little or no value. I also spoke with ACO Rachel Solviera who stated that during the cleaning process, she saved the items that could be cleaned, but that most of the items in the house were completely saturated in cat urine.

The Agreement between the Perreira’s and the Town of Stratford stated that Ms. Perreira was required to bring the five cats in her possession to the vet in adherence with the schedule contained in the Agreement. On July 28, 2011, ACO Solviera, ACO Pixley, ACO Fitzmorris and Maureen Whalen of the Stratford Health Department returned to the Perreira residence to check the conditions of the home and the five cats. Ms. Perreira allowed the officers to enter the house. ACO Solviera asked for the veterinarian receipts for the required veterinary care that was supposed to have been received over the past four months. Ms. Perreira did not have any paperwork and stated that she did not take any of the cats to the animal hospital. ACO Solviera issued a written warning for failure to provide the required veterinary care to the remaining cats in her possession pursuant to the State of Connecticut’s Animal Cruelty laws. On the back of the ticket, ACO Solviera wrote that the cats were to be photographed at the next visit.

On October 20, 2011, a judge signed a search and seizure warrant which was issued to seize all animals that were located at the Perreira residence. The warrant was executed on October 28, 2011.

On October 28, 2011, after reviewing the above information, the Town Attorney’s Office issued a letter of denial of Ms. Perreira’s claim in its entirety for Ms. Perreira’s failure to comply with the Agreement.

Subsequent to the Town Attorney’s letter of denial, the Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Stratford, Stephen Nocera, conducted an independent evaluation of the handling of the situation and of Ms. Perreira’s claim. His investigation concluded that the Town Attorney’s denial of Marion Perreira’s claim was appropriate.